

Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2004
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CRM
(202) 514-2008
TDD (202) 514-1888

RANDALL TODD ROYER AND IBRAHIM AHMED AL-HAMDI SENTENCED FOR PARTICIPATION IN VIRGINIA JIHAD NETWORK

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Attorney General John Ashcroft, Assistant Attorney General Christopher A. Wray of the Criminal Division, and U.S. Attorney Paul J. McNulty of the Eastern District of Virginia announced that Randall Todd Royer and Ibrahim Ahmed Al-Hamdi were sentenced today by U.S. District Court Judge Leonie Brinkema for their convictions on charges stemming from their participation in a network of militant jihadists centered in Northern Virginia.

Royer, 31, pled guilty in January 2004 to a two-count criminal information charging him with aiding and abetting the use and discharge of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, and with aiding and abetting the carrying of an explosive during the commission of a felony. In his plea agreement, Royer admitted to aiding and abetting co-defendants Masoud Khan, Yong Ki Kwon, Muhammed Aatique and Khwaja Mahmoud Hasan in gaining entry to a terrorist training camp in Pakistan operated by Lashkar-e-Taiba, where they trained in the use of various weapons. Royer also admitted to helping co-defendant Ibrahim Ahmed Al-Hamdi gain entry to the Lashkar-e-Taiba camp, where Al-Hamdi received training in the use of a rocket-propelled grenade in furtherance of a conspiracy to conduct military operations against India.

Royer acknowledged that he committed his offenses to help other jihadists gain entry to the Lashkar-e-Taiba training camp following a meeting on Sept. 16, 2001, at which an unindicted conspirator said that the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, would be used as an excuse to trigger a global war against Islam, and that the time had come for them to go abroad and, if possible, join the mujahideen. Three other individuals attending that meeting, Yong Kwon, Muhammed Aatique, and Khwaja Hasan – all of whom pled guilty – stated that they went to the Lashkar-e-Taiba camp to obtain combat training for the purpose engaging in violent jihad in Afghanistan against the American troops that they expected would soon invade that country.

Royer was sentenced today to 20 years in prison. Judge Brinkema sentenced him to serve 10 years in prison on both counts, and the sentences are to run consecutively. In addition, he was sentenced to three years of supervised release.

Al-Hamdi, 26, pled guilty in January 2004 to Count 20 of the government's Superseding Indictment, charging him with possessing a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, and to a one-count criminal information charging him with carrying an explosive during the commission of a felony. In his plea agreement, Al-Hamdi admitted to possessing a Saiga .308 caliber rifle with a telescopic sight and various ammunition, including tracer rounds, for the purpose of enhancing his ability to train for violent jihad in Chechnya, Kashmir or other places outside of the United States. Al-Hamdi also admitted to carrying a rocket-propelled grenade in furtherance of a conspiracy to undertake a military operation against India.

Al-Hamdi was sentenced today to 15 years in prison. Judge Brinkema sentenced him to serve five years in prison on the firearms count and 10 years on the explosives count; the sentences are to run consecutively to each other and to the 18-month sentence Al-Hamdi presently is serving for his illegal possession of a firearm as a non-immigrant alien. In addition, he was sentenced to three years of supervised release.

"Today's sentences demonstrate the severe penalties for aiding terrorist causes," said Attorney General John Ashcroft. "We will not allow terrorist groups to exploit America's freedoms to pursue their deadly goals."

The pleas by Royer and Al-Hamdi follow guilty pleas in the case in August and September 2003 by Donald Surratt, Muhammed Aatique, Yong Kwon and Khwaja Hasan, who were members of the same jihad network in Northern Virginia. Defendants Seifullah Chapman, Masoud Khan, and Hammad Abdur-Raheem were convicted of various terrorism-related offenses by Judge Brinkema on March 4, 2004, after a three-week trial in which Surratt, Aatique, Kwon, Hasan, and Al-Hamdi each testified.

Khan, who Royer helped reach the Lashkar-e-Taiba camp in Pakistan shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, was convicted for his actions after 9/11 of conspiracy to wage war against the United States and provide to support to the Taliban. Khan, Chapman and Hammad Abdur-Raheem all were convicted of conspiring to provide material support to Lashkar-e-Taiba, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, and to attack India in violation of the Neutrality Act, as well as of various firearms related offenses, for conduct that spanned from 2000 to 2003. Two other defendants charged in the case, Caliph Basha Ibn Abdur-Raheem and Sabri Benkhala, were acquitted at trial.

The government's investigation of the Virginia jihad network is continuing. Under the terms of their plea agreements, both Royer and Al-Hamdi are required to cooperate fully with the government in the investigation and prosecution of other individuals associated with this network.

This case was investigated by agents of the Washington Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorneys Gordon D. Kromberg and David H. Laufman, and Department of Justice Trial Attorney John T. Gibbs of the Counterterrorism Section of the Criminal Division, prosecuted the case for the United States.

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